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*THE LEGEND OF SAM'S POINT*

*BY*

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*THE LEGEND OF SAM'S POINT.*



P the mountain-side the old  
trail winds ;  
On the swampy moor a path  
it finds ;  
It clambers over the lichened rock ;  
It circles around the stumps  
which block  
Its way through the tangled wood ; it sprawls  
Through the stony pasture land ; it crawls  
Into many a ferny nook  
As it seeks the bank of the shaded brook  
Which it crosses on stepping stones.

Would you follow this trail—take heed !  
While its wild allure is sweet  
It has pitfalls for the feet  
Of the careless wanderer.  
In his reckless, headlong speed  
The whips of the low-branched trees,  
Urged on by the zealous breeze,  
Shall give him many a sting.  
He must ever mind his steps  
If he use the old dead log

As a bridge to the bubbling spring  
Or its treacherous moss may give  
And he'll sink to the inky depths  
Of an unexpected bog.

When was this old trail made? Who knows?  
When the first of the redman's foes  
Came into the land and called it new  
And found it fair,  
It was there.

He followed its curvings far  
From some vantage point to view  
The lay of a goodly land.  
And there he made his stand.

He said to himself: "This is mine.

I will take these valleys fine  
And rich with the powdered mould  
Brought down by the mountain stream;  
They will yield me a thousand fold.

I will take the mountain-side  
Where the furry beasts now bide  
And the trees that grow thereon.

No longer will I roam;

I will build myself a home;  
I will dig me a garden plot  
And fence me a farm about."

So he worked with a hand untired  
And did as his heart desired—  
He and hundreds of men like him.

For the savage Indian tribes  
Whose feet had worn the trail  
Over hill and brook and dale  
He had only mocking gibes.  
Though they were born on the soil  
And knew it as their own,  
He made it Fortune's spoil.  
But bitter must he atone ;  
For the savages wrought what harm  
They could to the settler's farm,  
To his flourishing garden plot,  
To the cows in his pasture lot,  
To his calves and pigs in pens,  
To his good wife's cocks and hens,—  
And to those of his neighbor as well.

Before he awoke from his dream  
Of a happy life under favoring skies,  
Of an unburdened life  
Far away from strife,  
A terrible feud was on  
And the peace he sought for gone.  
His house was burned and his garden trod,  
His growing corn returned to the sod  
And his cattle driven away ;  
His children cried and trembled with fright  
And his wife could not sleep in the restless night  
For dread of the coming day ;  
And he must begin again—  
He and the neighboring men.

No one wrote this history then.  
We shall never know it well.  
But Tradition began its tales to tell;  
They have echoed through the years ;  
And my pen has listening ears  
And writes one story down.

It writes of a mighty man  
With a queer old Dutch surname  
Who as Sam is known to fame.  
He was fleet of foot and strong of limb ;  
His piercing eye  
As it swept the sky  
Could name each bird on its distant wing ;  
The coming breezes brought to him  
The news of the forest happening ;  
With all of the woodman's needed skill  
His clumsy axe was a tool at will ;  
And with the Indian's inborn craft  
He tracked his prey and sent his shaft ;  
He had a heavy hand ;  
And his word had weight in the land.

He had also a kindly heart  
And he played a friendly part  
For each settler far and near  
When the trees were felled a space to clear  
Where must stand the new log house.  
Or when famine came ere the crops were grown  
He gave what he could from out his own.









But he reckoned the Indians not as men—  
They were vicious beasts of prey—  
And he thought that the Lord applauded him  
For each redskin less in the white man's way;—  
And his neighbors thought with him.

So whenever the corn  
Was trampled and torn,  
They armed themselves in a righteous wrath  
And followed the foe on a vengeful path  
And shot him merciless down.  
But the foemen too were valorous men  
As ever they rallied and rallied again;  
It was blood for blood  
And the horrible feud went on.

One glorious day  
When the fields were gay  
With aster and goldenrod—  
When bright and bold,  
Red, brown and gold,  
Shone the trees in Shawangunk's wood—  
On such a day,  
The stories say,  
This venturous man  
Went up on the mountain-side  
To visit his traps which were scattered wide  
Wherever the mink and muskrat hide;  
For the hills were his autumn harvest ground  
And his crops the furry beasts he found.

As he thought the enemy far away  
He deemed it safe unarmed to stray,  
So he set his gun by his rude hearthstone  
And, save for his dog, went forth alone.

As he set his traps he thought of the skins  
That were piled on an upper shelf;  
Of the pleasant way that he must take  
When he went with a pack  
On his sturdy back

To a busy town on a river's bank  
Where he'd change his pelts for pelf.  
He thrilled with the thought of the bargain keen  
He must make for his wife's new dress  
With linings and buttons and thread complete;  
And the Sunday shoes for his children's feet;  
And powder and lead and things like these;  
Then he felt his dog at his knees.

He curses the gun he has left behind  
And he curses the thoughts that had dulled his mind  
To the stealthy hurrying tread  
Of the warriors on his track.

He stops not to send a quick glance back  
But slips through the whirls of impeding ferns  
And climbs the bank where the wild stream turns  
And seeks for the notches that blaze the trail  
Where he hopes to elude his foes.

His flying feet crush the torpid snail  
And break the silence there.





The little beasts bound  
    Away from the sound;  
But the startled deer  
    Have nought to fear;  
And the great black bear  
    Need not turn to stare  
For he's past ere they know him near.

He cannot rest  
    When he reaches the crest  
Of Shawangunk's toilsome slope;  
    He may not think  
Of a welcome drink  
    In passing Maratanza's brink;  
For his foemen reach  
    Its narrow beach  
Almost as soon as he;  
    So he catches his breath  
And races with Death  
    To a goal he cannot see.

There's a great plain lying below his path—  
    A plain covered over with time-old trees  
Whose velvety tops sway soft in the breeze;  
    But he heeds them not as he onward springs  
Over roots and stones and hindering things.

He straightens himself at last on the brink  
    Where the great rock wall drops sheer.  
He raises his hands to his aching eyes

And sees that the sun is setting clear  
As it sinks to the plain behind Bear Hill;  
And he longs for the safe and cool retreat  
Where Bruin in winter sleeps.

Has it come—the moment of his defeat?  
He knows that this is the end of the race  
As vainly he seeks for a hiding place;  
For they 've covered the path down the dangerous steeps  
And of one through the caves he has lost the trace.  
There is nothing to see but the swaying tops  
Of the heaven-aspiring trees,—  
The velvety masses of evergreen trees—  
Staring up in his frightened face  
As they offer their arms for a safe embrace.

An instant he gazed at the sickening deep,  
Then nerved himself for the perilous leap—  
And the yell of the savage who saw him there  
Was echoing still when the rock was bare  
In the face of the setting sun.

The Indians crept to the bare rock's edge  
And looked for a dying foe;  
There was nothing to see but the banners green  
Of the militant hemlock trees  
Standing guard in the depths below,—  
The evergreen mass of wondering trees  
Whose murmuring twigs swept back in the breeze  
But did not tell  
What there befell.







## CONCLUSION.

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The story ends in a comforting way :

The baffled savages could not stay  
To tear the scalp from their victim's head ;  
They must swiftly fly for their lives instead ;  
They had felt the beat  
Of hurrying feet

As they lay outstretched in the sun's last glow  
And stared at the swaying trees below ;  
They knew that the neighbors had armed in wrath  
And were up and out on a murderous path ;  
So they cautiously slipped through cave and glen  
And away down the trail to their tribes again.

As for the hero, the neighbors found  
Him all unharmed on the cushioned ground ;  
The outspread arms of the tough hemlocks  
Had thwarted his threatened fate ;  
For, bending beneath his falling weight,  
They had passed him down from limb to limb  
Till he rocked in a cradle made for him  
By the interlacing trees.  
The whispering twigs laughed low in the breeze  
As they bade him live on for deeds like these.

Would you proof of the truth  
Of this well known tale  
You have only to find the same old trail



And follow it on  
Till it leads to the edge  
Of the great rock ledge  
Which to-day bears the hunter's name.  
As you shield your eyes from the blinding sun  
You can see for yourself where the deed was done.

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NOTE.—Samuel Gonsalus (familiarily known as Sam Consawley)  
was a famous hunter and scout. The episode related in the  
“Legend” occurred in the autumn of 1758.



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